



MARYLAND Department of Health

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Maryland's first seasonal flu cases reported

State health department urges residents to get flu shots, practice germ hygiene

Baltimore, MD (October 19, 2017) - The Maryland Department of Health announced today the first confirmed cases of seasonal flu for the 2017-2018 influenza season. Three laboratory-confirmed cases of seasonal influenza have been diagnosed in adults in the Baltimore metro area. One of the three individuals was hospitalized and subsequently released. The flu strain for all three was type A (H3). Last season, the first confirmed case of influenza was reported on October 7, 2016.

Influenza is a contagious respiratory disease that may lead to serious complications, hospitalization or even death. The virus that causes influenza spreads from person to person through coughing or sneezing, as well as through direct contact with infected people and contaminated surfaces or objects. Common symptoms include fever, body aches, fatigue, coughing, and sore throat. Symptoms usually begin one to four days after being exposed to the virus.

The influenza vaccine is the best way to protect yourself and your family from becoming ill with influenza. Yearly vaccinations are important because the strains of influenza that circulate change over time.

Influenza vaccine is recommended for everyone over the age of six months. It is especially important for individuals who are at high risk for influenza-related complications and severe disease, including:

- Children younger than 5, but especially children younger than 2 years old;
- Adults 65 years of age and older;
- Pregnant women (and women up to two weeks postpartum);
- Residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities;
- American Indians and Alaskan Natives;
- Persons of any age with chronic medical conditions;
- Persons undergoing therapy, or with a condition that may weaken their immune systems;
- Persons caring for someone in these groups should also be vaccinated to avoid spreading the disease to them. These persons include healthcare workers, household contacts of individuals at risk for complications from the flu, and daycare or school workers.

The vaccine is widely available, and Maryland residents are urged to get protected now by contacting their health care provider, local health department or neighborhood pharmacy to schedule an appointment.

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If you believe you are ill with influenza:

- Contact your healthcare provider for management of flu symptoms or treatment of any complications;
- Get rest and drink plenty of fluids;
- Cover your mouth and nose when sneezing or coughing;
- Use alcohol-based hand sanitizers and wash your hands often;
- Avoid crowded places like shopping malls or public transportation;
- Avoid unnecessary visits to hospitals or other settings where people with other conditions may get your flu and be affected severely; and
- Stay home from work or school whenever possible to avoid spreading the flu to your friends and coworkers.

Information on influenza activity in Maryland can be found [here](#). The page is updated weekly.

Maryland has an established Maryland Resident Influenza Tracking Survey (MRITS), an online, weekly survey that measures influenza-like symptoms. This tool is designed to enhance the state's existing influenza surveillance by monitoring influenza-like illnesses among residents who might not seek medical care. To register yourself, [click here](#). Individuals who sign up will receive online surveys where they can report any flu-like symptoms.

Additional information about the seriousness of influenza and the benefits of vaccination can be found on the [Health Department's website](#) or on the [Centers for Chronic Disease and Prevention's website here](#). Information on the influenza vaccine can be found by [clicking here](#), or call CDC at 1-800-CDC-INFO.

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Marylanders who need help finding substance-use-disorder treatment resources should visit MdDestinationRecovery.org or call the Maryland Crisis Hotline, which provides 24/7 support, at 1-800-422-0009. For information on many of the policies currently implemented to fight substance use disorder and overdose in Maryland, see <http://goo.gl/KvEzQw>. If you know of someone who needs treatment for a substance use disorder, treatment facilities can be located by location and program characteristics on our page at <http://goo.gl/rbGF6S>.

The Maryland Department of Health is the State agency that protects Maryland's public health. We work together to promote and improve the health and safety of all Marylanders through disease prevention, access to care, quality management, and community engagement. Stay connected: www.twitter.com/MDHealthDept and www.facebook.com/MarylandDHMH.